

## TURBINE PLANT STILL COMING

*By Tim Trainor*

While it is not by blitzkrieg, a German company is still planning to come to Butte.

In March, Fuhrländer AG proposed locating a \$25 million wind turbine assembly plant in Silver Bow County's business development district. The company has now finished its initial proposal and continues to move ahead with groundbreaking plans for next spring.

Multiple attempts to contact Fuhrländer representatives in Waigandshain, Germany, Monday were unsuccessful.

But Fraser McLeay, CEO of Kiwi Trade and Business in Stevensville, confirmed there were "no problems" and that the wind turbine plant is "continuing to move ahead." McLeay is writing Fuhrländer's market and feasibility study and strategic business plan; his contract stipulates confidentiality for much of the plans.

Both McLeay and Jim Smitham, Executive Director of the Butte Local Development Corporation, said the company had been waiting for the Renewable Energy Bill to pass Congress, which it did this summer.

The bill included more than \$17 billion in tax credits for renewable energy companies and helped make the Butte plant "economically feasible," said Smitham.

McLeay was touring wind turbine plants Monday in Washington and said that the wind tax credits included in the bill make the industry "exciting" and that he looked forward "to bring that plan and those jobs to Butte." He said his company's preliminary studies should be completed by December.

Joachim Fuhrländer and Gov. Brian Schweitzer announced in March that construction on the facility could begin "as soon as this year." The governor said that the project would create 150 jobs in its initial phase. Fuhrländer noted that another 600 jobs could be created if the project's second phase, a rotor blade production facility, comes online.

Fuhrländer, which has two manufacturing plants in Germany and has plans to build new plants in other parts of the world, intends to supply all of their North American customers with wind turbines from the factory in Butte.

Wind turbines built at the plant will cost about \$4 million each and produce up to 2.5 megawatts of electricity. A megawatt is enough power for about 800 homes.

Gubernatorial candidate Roy Brown attacked Schweitzer on the project last month,

when the two met with Stan Jones for a debate at Montana Tech. Brown insinuated that the project, which Schweitzer touted as new jobs coming to Montana, had fallen through.

McLeay and Smitham say that's not the case, and that plans continue to move slowly ahead.